

582 to release me in return for my father, who has passed away;
 584 *ana abāj rāk abrik tafār mis ruḡabti abrik tedarḡerni 'aard;*
abāj rāk." The *ḡaḡḡir* is expected to take pity on her and
 allow her freely to choose a husband for herself, but nobody
 can compel him to do so.

588 In case of his refusal there is nothing left for the girl
 but to elope. She flees with her youth to some distant tribe;
 584 there they put themselves under the protection of a powerful
 583 chief, *jinhāḡin jamn al-'arab jatazabbenūnakom*. They can then
 marry and live as man and wife in the same tent but are always
 threatened with the revenge of the *eben al-'amm*. An elopement
 is punished in the same way as murder, and the thirst for
 revenge must be satisfied.

'Aḡāḡ al-Maḡḡi was in love with a Rwala girl and wanted
 to marry her. To this her *eben al-'amm* would not consent.
 After three years of hopeless love, *mutaḡḡurūn ḡar m-ijjāḡa*
talāḡ siḡin, 'Aḡāḡ fled with his sweetheart to the Aḡl al-
 Semāl, tribes camping in the neighborhood of the Ḥawrān.
 As soon as the news spread next morning that the lovers had
 escaped, *innaḡom minḡāḡin*, the *eben al-'amm* with his kins-
 folk mounted their camels and went in pursuit of the lovers,
ḡalab. But 'Aḡāḡ reached his destination, was given a tent,
 and was united to the girl in marriage. His kinsfolk offered
 the pursuing relative a ransom, but the latter steadily refused.
 Leaving his tent two months afterwards, he went in search
 of 'Aḡāḡ, whom he found and killed with his young bride.
 Returning home, he demanded in the name of his kin from
 the kin of 'Aḡāḡ the blood money for seven murdered men,
 because the murder of an eloped woman, *ḡemāḡa*, is valued
 at that of seven men. Her lover should not have eloped with
 her, but, having done so, he should have protected her better,
 knowing the danger with which she was threatened.

If the *eben al-'amm* kills the man who has eloped with
 the girl, he pays only half of the blood money, as the eloper
 was himself the cause of his own death.

Dibān, the white slave of Megwel's family, fell in love
 with a Rwala girl, who returned his affection. Both knew
 that they could never belong to each other, for a slave, though
 white, dares not marry even the poorest Rwala woman. So
 they decided to escape to some settled country and to live in
 one of the villages there. But they were pursued and the girl
 was killed by her own brother.

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

139

A single Rwejlî of the 'Abdelle clan eloped with a white slave girl. The search for him proved useless — he disappeared without leaving a trace. Should he ever return, he would be killed by his own kin. 588 684 583

When a youth wishes to marry a certain girl, he confides his secret to some older friend, begging him to find out from his father whether he agrees to his wooing or not. It is considered bad form, 'ajb, for the son to ask his father for this permission. The father, who as a rule knows all the time which girl the son has chosen, says after hearing the news: "If it is Allâh's will, it will be good. Be it blessed. This day is already gone; to-morrow we shall realize his wish; al-journ fât dukra nakpiraredâh." Next day the father goes with some prominent man to the father of the girl. They sit down, exchange greetings, talk about various matters, and finally say: 584

"We want thy daughter X for the youth Y, nabri misak bistak al-flâne lil-welad al-flâni."

"All right. Salt cannot be increased except with salt again. Tajjeb mâ-rad al-melah illa-l-melah. I am satisfied. Let them beget children together. Speak with her cousin, eben 'ammâh."

Then they go to the eben al-'amm, sit down, salute, and converse a while. The youth's father rises, beckons to the cousin or the second cousin, leaves the tent with him, and they squat down at some distance from the tent, where nobody can hear them.

"We give thee good evening, namassik bel-ḥejr."

"Oh, good evening to you both! jâ masa-l-ḥejr. You surely did not come to me without desiring something, mâ-atam beln ja raraz."

"Yes, we come with a certain desire; na'am jājin bel-raraz."

"Then speak! shregâ."

"May Allâh add to thy days! We want her for him, and what thou desirest we hold ready for thee."

Now if the eben al-'amm agrees to the girl's marriage, he says: "I want this and that." If he does not, he answers: "She is destined to be my wife. I will not give her." But if he has no intention of marrying the girl himself and wants no compensation, he ends the parley with the words: "I wish you well."

The dowry or price demanded for the bride is expressed by the word sijâk. This means only the value put on the bride 583